

to a gray stone mansion on Park Avenue—an edifice with wrought-iron doors.

"Theda," he said, strolling into Mrs. Archibald Ogle's ivory-and-violet boudoir, "we Tomlinsons are after the wrong thing. From daddy down, we're all dead wrong!"

"Go away," shrugged Theodora Ogle. "I'm writing a letter." She torpidly dipped a jeweled pen into an ivory inkwell. She was a striking brunette, with blue-black hair, blue eyes with black shadows, dead-white skin, and scornful, scarlet lips. Her mother, Mrs. I. Tomlinson, had succeeded in marrying Theodora to many millions.

But I. Tomlinson, Junior, straddled an ivory chair and crossing his arms on the back of it, demanded: "Are you happy, Theda? Is daddy? Is the mater? Am I? No! We're all off the track. Money, money, money!"

Theodora addressed her letter and used a violet seal. "Touch that button, Tommy," she said.

I. Tomlinson jabbed at the electric call bell.

"Money's useful," said Theodora indifferently.

She gave the violet-sealed letter to a maid. "You can't get along without money—oodles of it," she said tonelessly.

I. Tomlinson went home and read his musical comedy.

JOY MEIGS pronounced I. Tomlinson's musical comedy *rambling*. The comedy was shelved. To celebrate its uncompromising failure, I. Tomlinson invited himself to dine with the Meigses, bringing with him the first course—a two-quart cardboard bucket of oysters. It was characteristic of I. Tomlinson to bring too much.

As naturally as a healthy duck takes to water, I. Tomlinson plunged into the habit of dining frequently in the back-to-nature, one-room home on East Thirty-fourth Street. Mr. Meigs seemed to find physical warmth in the sunny society of I. Tomlinson; and zealous Joy encouraged the blooming young man to try again at musical comedy, and go deeper.

"Theda," said I. Tomlinson to Mrs. Archibald Ogle, one afternoon in the Ogle limousine, "I've told your chauffeur to turn off the Avenue at Thirty-fourth."

"Why?" inquired Theodora laconically. "I want you to make a call with me, sis."

"Too tired, Tommy. Another day."

"To-day's the day! Honey, be a sport!" He seized Theodora's hands. "I'm going to introduce you to the girl I love!" he said excitedly.

Theodora frowned. "You're not making a fool of yourself, Tommy?" curly.

"All kinds of a fool! I'm—she's—" He swung Theodora's hands. His face was beatific.

The Ogle limousine stopped before a faded, brown stone front with a furnished room sign.

"Here we are!" said I. Tomlinson, squeezing his sister's hands. "Theda,"—his voice was suddenly sweet,—"*set your hat straight—I want you to make a good impression.*"

Theodora Ogle wore heliotrope chiffon cloth, huge silver fox furs, and a close-fitting turban of shaded velvet violets. An enigmatical expression on her face, she followed her brother up the steps of the faded brownstone front.

I. Tomlinson, Junior, knocked on the door of the Meigs home.

Mr. Meigs opened the door. Outlined against the light, his thin figure was like a delicate portrait. Behind him in the room, Joy Meigs, in her blue-and-white housekeeper's apron, was pinning some freshly washed dainty linen to a little clothes-line stretched across a window.

Mr. Meigs widened the door to the unexpected guests. "Won't you come in?" he invited simply.

"Why, yes," blundered I. Tomlinson, flushing. "This is my sister, Mrs. Archibald Ogle, Theda," fervently, "these are my dearest friends."

The ease with which Mr. Meigs placed a chair for Theodora was admirable.

Mrs. Ogle, although she had no courtly ancestors to aid her in appearing uncon-

scious of the fact that in the room a white-faced girl was taking down a window clothes-line, did well. Her smile focused tactfully on Mr. Meigs. "I met a General Meigs at Aiken last year," said she—"a perfectly charming old gentleman."

"My cousin," smiled Mr. Meigs. "Are you fond of country life, Mrs. Ogle?"

Joy Meigs came to her father's side in her white blouse and corduroy skirt. She regarded I. Tomlinson's sister with a dumb look.

Theodora's smile slowly shifted from Mr. Meigs to the girl her brother loved. She seemed to measure Joy, as Joy seemed to measure her.

"Sis and I have been to a matinee of the new war play, 'Torpedoed,'" said I. Tomlinson, gazing happily at Joy.

"Was it good?" asked Joy, in a low voice.

"Atrocious," answered Theodora. "Why can't we have happy drama? Have you seen 'The Half-Emptied Cup' at the Gaiety, Miss Meigs? That's standable."

"Yes, I liked it," said Joy, eyes lighting up. "Father and I had passes—there's a playwright on the floor above us who knows lots of newspaper men."

"I'd like to write plays," droned Theodora. "Some of my thoughts are rather dramatic at times."

"I tried to write a musical comedy once," said I. Tomlinson, eyes upon Joy. "A lady slammed it."

"I imagine so," smiled Theodora. "Heaven protect us from any output of your brain, Tommy."

"It had very good spots," said Joy quickly.

I. Tomlinson gave Joy a radiant look.

"I say, Theda," said I. Tomlinson, "look at these window gardens—lettuce and radishes and all that sort of thing all winter!"

"How interesting," said Theodora. She rose with a graceful sweep of heliotrope and silver fox, holding out her hand to Joy. "Come to see me," she said.

"Thank you," Joy's voice was smothered.

Theodora gave her hand to Mr. Meigs. "If I stop by for you, will you let me motor you out to our country place some day?" she asked. "Mr. Ogle's hobbies are dogs and horses."

"That will be bully!" applauded I. Tomlinson. "We'll make up a party." He was looking at Joy.

Theodora moved to the door. "Coming, Tommy?" she drawled.

IN the limousine, I. Tomlinson took a good look at Theodora. "Well?" he ripped out.

Theodora was looking out of the window. Her eyes came around slowly, brooded, merged to violet black. "Marry her, Tommy," she said, in a voiceless voice. "Maybe you'll get the happiness I've missed."

I. Tomlinson threw both arms about his sister and kissed the scornful scarlet mouth. "Lord love you!" he cried. He caught the knob of the limousine door—the car had turned into the Avenue and had been halted in a fleet of automobiles by the white-gloved hand of a traffic policeman. "I'm going to get out here," he said excitedly.

He stepped from the machine, waved an exhilarated hand to Theodora, and dove, through the starting limousines and touring cars, to the pavement. He landed up in front of a candy shop, and precipitated himself into it. He sent a ten-pound box of bonbons to Joy Meigs. A street flower vender happened to wave a bunch of lilies of the valley under his Roman nose. He bought them, and went on down the Avenue, holding them in his hand. An abounding impulse took him into a hotel writing room, where, big and oblivious, he penned:

DEAR MISS JOY: I flew in here to drop this to tell you what a bully time my sister had. Hurriedly yours, I. TOMLINSON, JR.

Beholding the bunch of lilies of the valley, he stuffed the little white cups into the letter, marked the envelop "Special," and pasted six two-cent stamps on it. He walked back to Thirty-fourth

Street and mailed the letter in a box at the corner. His rushing spirits carried him up the Avenue to the Park, through the Park to Riverside, up Riverside to Claremont, past Claremont to—anywhere.

HE went home sometime that night, had something that might be called sleep, and then something that might be called breakfast. The inopportune hour of nine o'clock in the morning found him, with an enormous box of roses under his arm, rapping on the door of the Meigses' room.

Joy opened the door. The ten-pound box of bonbons lay on the center table; brown little lily-of-the-valley heads, and an envelop adorned with a zigzag row of stamps, topped the sweets.

Handing her the roses, I. Tomlinson burst into incoherent speech, the disconnected purport of which boomed that he wanted Joy Meigs to marry him.

Joy put the roses on the piano stool and backed up against the piano.

The fact that her brown eyes had turned cold overnight swung like a suddenly started pendulum through the space of his words. He stopped talking and flushed.

"I wouldn't marry you if you were the last man in the world," said Joy Meigs evenly.

The flush plunged to pallor.

"You are the most tactless, insufferable, under-bred man I have ever met," she said with deadly calm. Her face went scarlet. "How dared you bring your sister to laugh at our poverty?" she flamed.

"Laugh?" he stammered.

"How dared you intrude upon us?" she continued.

"Intrude?" said I. Tomlinson.

Joy was belligerent. "Your sister is Mrs. Archibald Ogle, and you are a—society empty-head. How dared you pose to me as a writer of musical comedies? I thought, of course, you were writing for money. Every man I know works for money!"

He gathered himself together. "I told you my name when I first came here," he said rapidly. "I told your father who I was. Tomlinson cravats."

"Nobody told me 'cravats.' I thought you had to earn your living—some way. Every man I know earns his living. I earn my living. Please take that great box of candy away. Please take the roses back." Her voice quivered. "Roses like that can't belong to me."

Her voice steadied: "I'm—doing things. It's fine to fight. I'm going to be successful. Fine!" The voice suddenly drooped, begging: "Please don't make me—silly." The clever hands, tremulous, went up and covered Joy's face.

I. Tomlinson drew a submerged breath. His eyes seemed to struggle over the hidden face. He spoke uncertainly. "If you'll stand me, in spite of the cravats—I'm a sort of decent fellow, Joy—" He ended with a humble, despairing slump.

The fatalistic shake of her vivid head denied him.

He took his hat and stick, and the too big box of roses, and the ten-pound box of bonbons. "All right," he whispered.

He went from the room and down the steep flights of stairs.

I. Tomlinson, Jr., went home. He packed a traveling bag, putting into it his musical comedy. "Jackson," he said to the serving-man, "tell the people I've gone on a hunting trip."

With the look of a sleep-walker, I. Tomlinson went downtown and purchased a chafing-dish. With this and his bag, he walked through East Thirty-fourth Street and above the drug store around the corner he engaged a "furnished" room. He unpacked his bag, kicked it under the iron bed, placed the script of his comedy before him on an inadequate table, took out his fountain pen, and went to work.

SEVEN doors away, sorrow overtook Joy Meigs. One night Mr. Meigs died.

The house with the furnished room sign mourned for the moment with Joy. The wary-eyed landlady brought her cups of beef broth and asked no payment. The pert little milliner on the second floor came up and took the red feather out of

Joy's boyish round hat and covered the hat with crape. The house clubbed together for a wreath of wheat and immortelles. After it was all over, and the house had forgotten, Joy tried hard to cry. Then she called up the Tomlinson residence on West Fifty-fourth Street and asked in a faint voice for I. Tomlinson, Junior. A serving-man informed her that "Mr. Tommy" had gone away on a hunting trip. It was then that Joy looked at a bottle of denatured alcohol marked "poison."

I. TOMLINSON, JUNIOR, had written a crackerjack musical comedy. With the bulky, blue-backed script under his arm, he did what he had not done for weeks—turned down Thirty-fourth Street toward the house with the furnished room sign.

It was eight o'clock in the evening, a rainy night. As I. Tomlinson, under a big umbrella, approached the faded brownstone front, Joy Meigs came out. She opened an umbrella, walked rapidly down the steps, and turned west.

I. Tomlinson started impetuously forward. His glimpse of her face had shocked him! As he plunged to overtake her, he became confused, mystified. One minute he was sure that the umbrella ahead sheltered Joy, and the next minute it seemed to him to cover a wild, running thing. For some intangible reason, his forehead turned clammy. It would have been easy to overtake the umbrella, peer under it, and make sure. But something held him back.

Westward, through the driving rain, he followed, dark block after dark block—to the river. Here, Joy lowered her umbrella and lifted her face to the sky.

I. Tomlinson's heart seemed to burst with a mighty sob in his breast. He ran to her side. "I thought it was you," he said.

Joy smiled strangely, as if he were part of a vision.

He took her hand. "It's raining," he said, without meaning. He straightened her hat, as if she were a runaway child. "What's the matter, Joy?" he got out.

Her eyes never left his face. She shook her head.

"Never mind," he said. "We'll go home and ask Mr. Meigs."

Eyes clinging to him, she fainted.

He ran with her in his arms along the pier to the place where the Hudson boats come in and the taxicabs are lined up. He lifted her into one. In the taxi he stared at the fresh crape on her hat.

With his comedy script stuffed in his overcoat pocket, he carried her up three flights. The room was in silence and darkness. He laid her on the couch and lighted a gas-jet. With the step of one in familiar surroundings, he went to the alcove and drew a basin of water. On his knees, he bathed her temples. With a fluttering breath, she opened her eyes.

"Don't try to tell me," he said. "I know."

Her eyes drank of his. Her words were just a breath: "Where have you been?"

"In deep water, Joy."

Her dazed eyes, finding reason in his, filled. The tears brimmed over at last. She struggled up, wringing her hands.

"I was going to kill myself," she stammered. "I'm a coward! I thought I was strong." She hid her face on his shoulder.

His hand on her hair vibrated mute protection. He was looking at the untended window gardens.

Her gaze followed his, and went blank. She moistened her lips; they formed aridly: "Dad!"

His hands closed about her face. "Joy, look at me," he commanded.

Her glance wavered back to him.

"Joy, girl, I love you!" he whispered. "Look at me—look! You're not going to suffer any more. You're never going to be lonely again. Poor little plucky fighter! I'm going to take care of you. You're mine. Sweetheart, I love you! Joy, give me your eyes again."

Her sepia lashes lifted; slowly her lips parted with the ghost of a smile; and then as he bent over her a rush of color swept across her face and trembling, she lifted her mouth to his.